

# Hope In A Time Of Corona

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This is not the first time the world has faced a public health crisis. Our world, and its different regions, have dealt with various epidemics and pandemics<sup>1</sup>. We can easily say that outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics are part of the history of living things—widespread diseases are inevitable! However, it is not pleasant as it causes individual, societal, and economic suffering. Thus we don't have any other option but to fight back with all we got.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has frightened the world population with its economic destruction and death. Countries with highly-built public health infrastructures and intriguing budgets have been devastated by this pandemic. In other words, the thought of the human race being unable to control the further spread of a pandemic around the world, given the current peak of scientific and technological developments, is frustrating and disappointing, however, it teaches all of us important life lessons.

Despite our struggle with COVID-19, we learn that our basic preventive measures<sup>2</sup> (e.g. isolation, quarantine, handwash, Personal Protective Equipment [PPE], etc.) are effective against all person-to-person disease transmission. These measures are never outdated and are more important today than ever before.

A good example of how crucial handwashing is for infection control is the work of Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis<sup>3</sup>. Semmelweis's work has decreased the maternal deaths in his hospital in which he enforced mandatory handwash for physicians before examining their next patient. His work has faced, in the beginning, rejections from the physicians

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<sup>1</sup> 20 of the worst epidemics and pandemics in history

By Owen Jarus - Live Science Contributor, All About History March 20, 2020

<https://www.livescience.com/worst-epidemics-and-pandemics-in-history.html><https://www.livescience.com/worst-epidemics-and-pandemics-in-history.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Effect of Improving Basic Preventive Measures in the Perioperative Arena on Staphylococcus aureus Transmission and Surgical Site Infections: A Randomized Clinical Trial.

Randy W. Loftus, MD1; Franklin Dexter, MD, PhD1; Michael J. Goodheart, MD1; et al.

*AMA Netw Open.* 2020;3(3):e201934. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.1934

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2763608>

<sup>3</sup> M Best, D Neuhauser. Ignaz Semmelweis and the birth of infection control. *Qual Saf Health Care* 2004;13:233–234. doi: 10.1136/qshc.2004.010918.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1743827/pdf/v013p00233.pdf>

and viewed it as exhausting and too much work. He is often called ‘the Father of Infection Control’.

We can easily relate to the work of Semmelweis in our fight against COVID-19 as handwashing and other basic preventive measures are the best ways of controlling the spread of this disease. It is not always our fancy scientific achievements, despite its glamorous role in world development, that come to the rescue of humanity, sometimes it is the least expected, yet vital measures.

Nevertheless, the success of such measures heavily depends on the collective efforts of the society. By society working together, and every individual doing their part of the job by cooperating with the rest of their society, basic preventive measures prove to be very effective barriers and our best defense line against COVID-19. However, we should state that if we want the society to cooperate and bring down a common threat (e.g. COVID-19), they should first be aware of the existence of the threat, how serious the threat is to the entire society, and the risk it imposes on everyone--and that is public health awareness.

Lack of public health awareness in itself is a ‘health problem’ that could worsen public health emergencies such as COVID-19. If people don’t quite comprehend how to protect themselves from public health threats, then society crumbles and suffers the consequences of health illiteracy<sup>4</sup>. Increasing society’s health awareness is principal in putting the basic public health preventive measures into practice. Practicing basic preventive measures requires basic knowledge and awareness towards the seriousness of the public health threats that humanity faces from time to time.

In Somalia, a number of community-based organizations are currently working on increasing health awareness in our societies. Somali Public Health Association (SOPHA) is one of our community-based public health organizations that are on the front line of the efforts to limit the transmission of COVID-19.

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<sup>4</sup> Module 2: Health Illiteracy and Poor Health Outcomes  
<http://www.uniteforsight.org/visual-literacy/module2>